

# **School Bus Driver Continuing Education Curriculum**

School Bus Driver Manual

## **Keeping You And Your Students Safe**

### **II**

**The Next Generation**

Certification

For

2009 – 2011



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Sec. 51 Of Act No. 187 of 1990 ( The Pupil Transportation Act) being Section 257.1851 of the Michigan Compiled Laws, requires that a driver of a school bus transporting passengers, or driver of a pupil transportation vehicle used for the regularly scheduled transportation of passengers to and from school and home, complete an entry level school bus safety education course **and a six hour continuing education course within two years after the entry level certification and each succeeding two years thereafter.** Each course must be completed at an educational agency approved by the Michigan Department of Education.

The new continuing education curriculum, approved by the Michigan Department of Education for the training period July 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009, was compiled with the cooperation of many individuals concerned with the safety of Michigan's children. Many resource materials, as outlined below, were researched and reviewed for this compilation, and produced by Vincent J. Weiler, with the direct involvement and collaboration of the Training Agency Association of Michigan (TAAM) and its Continuing Education Subcommittee. TAAM is composed of educational agencies throughout Michigan approved by the Department of Education to offer school bus driver safety education.

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# Year In Review

## School Bus Driver Manual Updates

Every driver should maintain their Beginning School Bus Drivers Manual. Current updates for your manual are available on the Michigan Department website after laws are changed or manual units are updated.

New units for your manual can be printed of and placed in your binder. The website for these unit updates is:

[www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530\\_6569\\_38338---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530_6569_38338---,00.html)

Other important information regarding Pupil Transportation is also available on this website.

## School Bus Driver Physical

The Michigan Department of Education is recommending that Michigan adopt the physical requirements, forms, and medical cards used by U.S. Department of Transportation. At the time of the printing of this manual the changes to the law on medical requirements are only in the process of becoming law and may become law during the training of this curriculum.

## Other Updates

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# **Driving The Modern Roundabout**

## **What Is A Modern Roundabout**

Simply stated a modern roundabout is a transportation management tool that moves traffic through an intersection without the aid of traffic signals. More specifically, a modern roundabout is an intersection with one-way circulation around a central island where entering traffic must yield the right-of-way to the traffic circulating within the roundabout.

## **Why Roundabouts**

There are a number of benefits associated with this type of intersection control:

### **Safety**

A key benefit of modern roundabouts is safety. According to the Federal Highway Administration installing a roundabout typically results in:

- A 75% reduction in injury-accidents
- A 90% reduction in fatalities
- A 40% reduction in pedestrian injuries, 75% fewer conflict points compared to standard intersections

### **Less Delay**

Roundabouts are designed to handle traffic more efficiently than intersections controlled by a signal.

With traffic constantly moving and vehicles entering the intersection at lower speeds, more vehicles are able to move through the intersection at any given time.

### **An Improved Environment**

Since roundabouts reduce the amount of time vehicles spend idling at intersections, they provide environmental benefits by reducing the fuel consumption and exhaust emissions.

## **How To Drive In A Roundabout**

### **Slow Down:**

Driving Speeds in roundabouts are 20 m.p.h. or less.

### **Lane Choices:**

Drivers must make the appropriate lane choice, based on their destination, prior to entering a multi-lane roundabout. As in a standard intersection, use the left lane to make left-turns, U-turns, or straight-ahead movements; use the right lane right turns or

straight-ahead movements. Never change lanes, pass, or overtake another vehicle after entering a roundabout.

**Yield Principle:**

When preparing to enter a roundabout, yield to all traffic in all lanes already circulating within the roundabout. Vehicles in the roundabout have priority over the entering vehicle.

**Large Vehicles:**

Give special consideration to trucks, buses, trailers, and other large vehicles. Never pass or drive adjacent to large vehicles within a roundabout.

**Emergency Vehicles:**

Do not impede vehicles. If you are within a roundabout when an emergency vehicle approaches, move through, exit, and then pull over.

**Pedestrians:**

All pedestrians must cross at the designated crosswalks. Although vehicles are required to stop for pedestrians, always exercise caution when crossing. Pedestrians are usually prohibited from the central island.

**Bicyclists:**

Bicyclists are encouraged to walk their bikes and use the pedestrian crosswalks. Only experienced bicyclists should ride within the roundabout.

# Steering Clear Of Liability

By Peggy Burns

## Discussion Guide

### Segment 1

#### **April and Fatonya: Steering Clear of Liability for Student Fights That Erupt After Discharge**

"This Louisiana driver became aware that two middle school girls were having a bit of a dispute...When the driver stopped at a district elementary school, April came hurriedly past other students to the front of the bus, and reported to him that Fatonya was picking a fight. In fact, she punched at April right in front of the driver. A big girl, Fatonya would have been too much for the driver, who put both girls off the bus and stood between them on the sidewalk. He called to a teacher to tell the principal. The driver knew his limits. In the meantime, the driver determined he was blocking other school buses, and that he had to move his bus. The girls seemed to have quieted down. Are you getting the picture? The driver got back on his bus, pulled it up a bit, looked back and saw Fatonya on top of April.

April's parents sued both the school district and the driver. The court held that the driver "failed to meet his obligation to April when he put her off the bus into the very arms of her waiting assailant." His obligation? To provide supervision after the girls exited from the bus, since he "knew that April needed protection from the bullying Fatonya. That's the key – he knew what would happen."

#### ***What were the options available to this driver? How could you have avoided all this?***

- "It seems like he did everything right." That's what the drivers often say about this story. And, that's why it's important to look at what this Louisiana driver might have done differently, in light of what he knew.
- What steps should you take if a student tells you another student has threatened to fight with him or her? Does your answer change if you heard about the threat "through the grapevine" of student rumor? What would you do differently (if anything) if the reporting student is a "whiner"? If the aggressor has a history of violence? If s/he doesn't?
- What would you have said to the dispatch if you called in about this situation? Do you think the answer you would have received might depend on how you worded the question? Since you're there, and dispatch isn't, it's very important to provide all relevant information. How can dispatch frame questions to you to get at the information that will

help to clarify the situation, so that the advice that you get takes all relevant factors into consideration?

- Of the options presented in the video, which would you have taken?
  - ◊ Delay moving the bus to avoid leaving the girls alone?
  - ◊ Bring one of the two girls back with you onto the bus?
  - ◊ Ask the teacher to stay with the girls?
  - ◊ Would you have done something entirely different? If so, why?
- Could the driver have kept the girls on the bus and separated them? If so, how could he have addressed the likelihood of danger once the girls disembarked?
- Do you think the appropriate action depends at all on whether you know that the alleged “threatener” has previously fought with others?
- How would you expect to receive information about prior aggression by the “threatener”? From whom would you expect to get it? What, if anything, could you do to increase the likelihood of getting that information? Do you want it, or do you think you’d be better off not knowing, in the light of the words of the video:
  - ◊ “Remember – and this is important – the driver was well aware of the lurking threat to April.”
  - ◊ You may not be held responsible for what you can’t reasonably predict, but you’ll be vulnerable every time when you know danger is likely.
- Why is it better to know, than not to know, about relevant student information? What are the restrictions on your ability to share student information with others?
- When, if at all, are you expected to intervene physically in a fight? What factors should you weigh to determine if that’s a good idea?

## **Segment 2**

### **A High School Student’s Request Leads to Tragedy: Steering Clear of Liability for Unauthorized Stops**

“An Illinois driver accommodated a high school student’s request to be dropped off across from a service road leading to the rear entrance of the high school.

The bus company’s policy allowed a driver to honor students’ requests for drop off if the driver could do so safely.



It was still dark that day, and the place selected had minimal road shoulder composed of loose pebbles and grass, and no sidewalk, crosswalk or intersection. There were woods and ditches along the side of the road. The student took about one and a half steps into the northbound traffic lane when a van struck him. His high school career ended with brain damage and a multimillion dollar judgment against the bus company.”

***Most policies would not allow for this much driver discretion.  
In those cases, how would you handle a student request?***

- What is your responsibility to know about district/company policies? How/where would you find out about them?
- Think about this scenario in light of a news article that reported a student’s death when a sport-utility vehicle hit her as she crossed a street to get to her home:

A substitute bus driver was on duty that day. He had been handed an incomplete list of bus stops for a route that originated at the girl’s school. He called to get the other stops, and checked the information he had on the stops already included. While he wrote down the correct intersection for the girl, he failed to write down the side of the road of her homes location.

- How could you keep this from happening in your district or company?
- How do you balance your desire to provide customer service with the risk of responding to on-the-spot student – or parent – requests?
- When a student asks for special accommodations, could you call in to dispatch about the request? Do you think the answer you’d receive might depend on how you worded the question? Since you’d be on scene and dispatch isn’t, it’s very important to provide all relevant information. How can dispatch frame questions to you to get at the information that will help them make a decision?
- How would you handle the request if it was after hours, and no one answered at dispatch?
- Where students or parents have submitted stop change request forms, what factors do you think would determine whether the requested location should be granted or denied? What is the importance of each of the following?

- ◇ Age
  - ◇ Maturity
  - ◇ Disability
  - ◇ Time of day
  - ◇ Time of year
  - ◇ Existence of previous incidents at that location
  - ◇ Traffic patterns
  - ◇ Rationale given for request
  - ◇ Possible creation of precedence
- Do you have a role in reporting factors to be considered by supervisors in granting or denying a stop request change request? What is your role? What should you report?
  - What is your district or company expectation in a situation like the one presented in the video.

### Segment 3

#### **Do Not Release Unattended: Steering Clear of Liability for Failure to Follow Directives**

"Here's what the driver knew: The special education students in her charge were to be delivered into the hands of a supervising adult. The driver had a clear directive: Do not release unattended. What she did, however, in spite of what she knew, was to allow a female student to run off the bus and go into the school alone. She watched, as a male student dashed past her off the bus and entered the building. In fact, the girl went into a ladies' room, and was followed by the boy who sexually assaulted her in that ladies' room."

***The unfortunate reality about this next story is that the driver had the information she needed to keep her students safe.  
But she didn't use it.***

- What information do you receive about students? In what format? From whom would you expect to get the information? Is there anything you can do to increase the likelihood of getting that information? Do you want it, or do you think you're better off not knowing, in light of the words on the video?
- In the video, the students ran off the bus. What if anything, could you have done to prevent students from harm where the students behave in similar unpredictable, spontaneous ways?
- What would you do if you knew the student had run off the bus before?

- In the case described in the video, the students are special education students. Are there other situations in which students are only to be released into the hands of a supervising adult? When? How would you know? What steps are you expected to take in those situations?
- Think about what the court said: "Drivers are required to use the bus as a safety device, and to keep the students in it until they can leave the bus safely." Can you think of situations in which the message would be particularly important? Could it be relevant in bad weather? Traffic situations? Presence of unknown or threatening individuals? Other times? Do the steps you should take change from situation to situation?

#### **Segment 4**

##### **Gang Fight at a Bus Stop: Steering Clear of Liability Because of Unauthorized Riders**

"Despite transportation department policy, a driver failed to check the IDs of high school students and allowed a girl – who wasn't a bus rider at all – to board the bus. Her reason for getting on? She had told two other girls that she wanted to join a gang; the girls told her she could 'jump in.' The girls directed the wannabe gang member to board a particular bus – their bus – which would take her to a place where she could 'jump in.' The three girls arrived at the park where the bus stopped, and gang members beat our victim up badly – that was her intention."

***Does your policy require you to check to be sure the student has a right to ride? If so, do you check the bus passes, eligibility lists, or any other form of ID?  
What are you looking for?***

- Where, if at all, does your district or company policy address your role in ensuring that the right students ride?
- What, if anything, does your district or company use to distinguish a rider from a non-rider? How do you know which bus each rider is assigned to?
- Do you have different procedures depending upon whether it's the beginning of the school year?
- What steps are you expected to take if a student isn't a rider? Is it different if s/he is a rider, but is not assigned to your bus? Are particular bus stops designed on IDs or other eligibility indicators? How?

- Do you have accurate parent/guardian contact information to use when you need it?
- What should you do if you find out that you need updated student identification information, and you don't have it?
- In the video, there's no indication that the driver had any reason to know that there would be a gang initiation, or any fighting at all. What would you do if you actually heard students talking about gang activity or some kind of initiation or hazing?

## Segment 5

### **Andy Turner, whose driver arrived early: Steering Clear of Liability by Following Published Schedules**

"Since two children who usually rode the bus were not on the bus that afternoon, the driver decided to modify her route, and arrived at Andrew's house approximately thirty minutes earlier than the normal arrival time of 4:18. She was well aware that Mr. Turner's car was normally in the driveway, because he made sure to be home in time for his son Andrew's arrival. On this day, when she arrived a half hour early, the car wasn't there. Seven-year-old Andrew assured the driver that he had a key, and she allowed him to exit. The driver worried about her decision, and later testified that she was so distracted by her concern over what she had done that she missed her next stop, and had to turn back. Andrew didn't have his key that day, and wanting to get in the house, he found another way. Upon Mr. Turner's arrival, he found Andrew unconscious and trapped in the window which had closed on the boy, pinning him between the window and the sill. Andrew was rushed to the hospital, but never regained consciousness and died five days later.

***It's important that you recognize the elements of this case that distinguishes it from others you might be thinking about.***

***The court said, "This is not a situation where the bus driver was unaware that no one was at the house." What if you have reason to know of factors which increase the chance of harm to a student?***

- "The driver decided to modify her route." This driver made the decision to alter her schedule on her own, without any input from dispatch, or anyone else. What would you do – with whom would you consult – if faced with a similar decision?

- Do you call parents if you're running early? Pull over to the side and wait? Drop another student off first whose parents *are* home?
- How do you ensure you have accurate contact information for parents so you can call them when necessary?
- Think about the students who ride the bus. How would you know if something had changed for the student? Would you know if something unusual had occurred? What would you do?
- This driver "worried about her decision" and even "missed her next stop" because she was so distracted. Did she have a second chance to prevent tragedy? What should she have done?
- What if Andy Turner *had* had a key? Would the driver have made the right decision? Why or why not?
- Is there any age in Michigan, or in accordance with your district or company policy, when you "can allow a student to enter his/her house alone if you know his/her parent isn't home"?
- If part of the problem here was that the driver deviated from consistent, published scheduled route, would the district or company have been better off if it didn't publish a schedule? Why or why not?
- Without taking into account the issue of potential liability, what are the advantages of having a published schedule that allows parents to know when their children will arrive? What is your role in communicating that schedule?
- What about "early out" days? Who lets parents know if changes are made during the course of the school year?
- Make no mistake: a number of factors come together in this tragic case to result in the lawsuit. Consider ways in which this situation is like – and not like – a day when no one is at the bus stop to meet a student. Is it different if the parent has always been there, even if not required to be? What would you do? What if you can't reach anyone at school?

## Winter Driving

Driving a school bus on snow and ice requires a specific and unique set of skills. Make sure you follow the standards that are in place for your district or company.

### Before You Get Started

The safety of any school bus begins before the bus leaves the bus yard. In the winter months it is important to be prepared for bad or inclement weather.

Know the weather forecast and be prepared. Weather conditions can go from mild to severe even during a single run.

Make sure you are dressed for winter conditions or at least take along items and clothing to be safe if conditions deteriorate.

Make sure your bus is ready for winter conditions:

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| • Tires                | The better the tread the better the traction. Proper inflation and lug nuts tight               |
| • Wiper Blades         | Must be in good condition and working order.  |
| • Lights & Reflectors  | Good working order and not covered with snow, ice or debris. Keep clean for maximum brightness. |
| • Windows & Mirrors    | Clean and Clear. Make sure side windows are closed tight to protect children from cold.         |
| • Strobe Light         | Working and not covered with snow or ice.   |
| • Fluid Levels         | Radiator and windshield washer fluids are full  |
| • Heaters & Defrosters | Good working order. Use to keep windows clear.  |
| • Fuel                 | Make sure your fuel tank is full.   |

It is also important to have extra items on board which may include an ice scraper and shovel.

Follow district policies on what may be carried on your bus.

### **Winter Driving Conditions**

Driving in winter conditions such as snow or ice can be more difficult and this is especially true in a school bus.

The first ice or snow and even rain after a dry spell, can be worse because of the residual oils imbedded in the road and combined with moisture can result in an extremely slippery surface and can result in unsafe conditions. Most crashes occur when you don't expect the surface of the road to be slippery.

When the temperature drops below 32°, ice can form on the road and especially bridges and overpasses. In cold temperatures when the road looks wet, it may be hiding the fact that it is really covered with a veneer of ice.

Shaded areas are a good place for ice to form. Early morning hours are especially dangerous as moisture has had an opportunity to sit on the cold pavement and freeze.

Always approach intersections cautiously. Sometimes intersections are slippery. This is caused by moisture emitting from the exhaust of vehicles waiting at a busy intersection and quickly freezing on the pavement.

Plan Ahead: Always assume the worst.

When driving on snow or icy roads, go slow. The **conditions**, not the suggested speed limit are the determining factor.

### **Braking and Stopping**

Knowing how to brake on icy roads will allow bus drivers to maintain better control of their bus.

Be aware of traffic directly in back of the bus.

A 30 ton school bus may require 12 times longer than normal car to stop on a road covered with ice or snow. Remember to take this into account particularly when picking up students.

Apply brakes slowly using a gentle firm pressure. Do not slam on your brakes. This will lock up your brakes and may cause the bus to skid.

If you find yourself beginning to slide on snow or ice, DON'T PANIC. Take your foot off the gas and DO NOT hit the brakes. Steer the front of your vehicle INTO THE SKID (the same direction you are skidding).

It is important for drivers to know what type of braking system is on their bus.

Buses use either the Anti-Lock Braking System (ABS) or the Non Anti-Lock Braking System.

On the non-ABS system, the wheels may lock up on ice or snow when the driver firmly applies pressure to the brakes.

In non-ABS systems, engage the brakes. If you feel the wheels lock up, immediately take your foot off the brake. The bus will not respond to steering if the brakes are locked up. Lightly re-engage the brakes. Do not pump the brakes. Downshift the bus to slow it down.

On an ABS system the braking wheels are directed by computer controlled sensors and when brakes are firmly engaged, the wheels do not lock up. They self adjust to the conditions of the road.

In an ABS system, the driver firmly presses down on the brake . The driver will feel a slight vibration as the ABS system is engaged. The brakes will release and engage automatically.

### **Loading and Unloading**

Keep steps clear of snow and ice.

Have students stand far back from the road.

Tell students to use handrails.

Be consistent in picking up your students. They will be more likely to be on time if you are.

Have students wait until the bus comes to a complete halt before they approach the bus.

**Stay calm – in focus and in charge of your bus as well as the students that you transport.**



# INTERVENTION STRATEGIES FOR SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS

## **Introduction**

Students may exhibit inappropriate behavior. The job of the bus driver is to intervene and prevent inappropriate behavior from escalating out of control which may cause harm to other students as well as a distraction to you, the bus driver.

Having a bus load of unruly pupils probably causes drivers more grief than any other situation they encounter. Furthermore, the potential for this unruly behavior increases depending on the type of relationship a driver establishes with his/her passengers. Knowing how to manage or get along with their passengers will, to a large degree, be determined by drivers' expectations and how well drivers understand youngsters; what they are like, why they act the way they do; and what their desires and needs are.

Merely understanding the students, however, is not sufficient. How drivers relate to the students is equally important. Establishing this relationship is done through communication, both verbal and non-verbal; in what drivers say, how they say it and what they do.

The type and quality of communication drivers have with their student passengers will, to a large extent, determine how the students behave. It may also determine how safe the bus trips are and how happy drivers will be in their chosen occupation.

## **Positive Environment**

The driver sets the stage for how things will go on the school bus and throughout the school day: You are the first school contact with each child everyday.

We do not always know what environment the student is leaving when he/she boards the bus in the morning. Many students that demonstrate problems on the bus may come from a home with a negative environment. Drivers need to set the tone of the bus by being positive and greeting students with warmth and enthusiasm. Talking to students and engaging them in conversation will let students know that you care about them.

The driver sends out an important message to all students riding the bus. Simple small acts of kindness can set the tone for encouraging students to like their bus driver and then be able to listen to what they have to say.

A driver who demonstrates a negative environment will cause students to disrespect the driver and consequently not to listen or follow the rules of the bus.

Drivers need to remember that their attitude rubs off on others. A driver with a positive and friendly attitude will be more than likely to have a safe and satisfying run.

### **Bus Rules Are A Must**

Each and every student needs to know what the rules on the bus are and what the consequences are if they don't follow the rules.

Fair and consistent application of the established rules is an important part of creating a safe bus environment.

### **Behavior Problems**

Approximately 10% of the students riding a school bus behave exceptionally well, while another 10% exhibit disruptive behavior on a regular basis. The other 80% are normally behaved. Drivers do not want the majority of well behaved students influenced by the rather small group of students who display inappropriate behavior.

One of the main tasks of a bus driver is to make sure the small percentage of students who are causing problems are held in check. Identify who they are and if they step out of line, see that the established consequences are appropriately administered.

When a driver is confronted with a situation of bad or inappropriate behavior, he/she have to act credibly. If the other students see that you don't take appropriate action, the other students will be encouraged to display similar behavior.

#### **Things that work**

- A friendly smile
- A one-on-one talk
- A reward program
- Concentrating on the ringleader
- Call the nuisance person to the front of the bus
- Tell the students they are good when they are
- Model the behavior you want to occur
- Address issues in a timely manner
- Make eye contact
- Give short clear directions – Be specific

- Maintain a calm atmosphere – Be positive – Be consistent
- Don't threaten what you can't follow up on
- Treat all students fairly and consistently, the same way
- Take each day as a new day – Never hold grudges against a student
- Share good news with students and parents
- Listen to students and really hear what they are saying
- Deal with facts not feelings
- Pay attention to what goes on in the bus
- Leave the dignity of the student intact

With the older students, establish student ownership of the problem by asking:

- What they are doing?
- What they are supposed to be doing?
- What do they think is the solution?

Tell the student's the consequences of their action. If there are choices of consequences, then give them the choice.

### **Tips For Maintaining A Good Driver Attitude**

(Taken from: NHTSA- Safety Series)

- Get a good night's sleep.
- Keep alert physically and mentally.
- Leave personal problems at home.
- Seek help if you need it.
- Arrive at work early to do a thorough pre-trip inspection and catch up on important news and information.
- Greet everyone with a smile and by name.
- Be patient, even-tempered and understanding.
- Show respect if you wish to receive it.
- Bring a sense of humor.
- Be able to laugh at yourself.
- Learn to relax.
- Close your eyes; breathe evenly; think about the tension draining from your body. Repeat "I am calm" and "I'm good at what I do".
- Be free from the effects of alcohol, illegal drugs, and medications.
- Extend a hand to others as well as new drivers.
- Watch for stressful symptoms in others and take appropriate action.
- Be part of the team.
- Get involved in bus lot activities. Join other drivers to solve problems. Participate at safety meetings.
- Ask questions if you are unsure about anything.
- Believe in your ability to do a good job

## **Special Education Students**

Defining the difference between Regular Education and Special Education Students when inappropriate behavior issues are present can be important.

- Regular education and special education students can and should be held accountable for their behavior. If continuous inappropriate behavior is encountered, the bus driver, based on district or company procedures, may suspend Regular Education Students from riding the bus. Remember riding the bus is a privilege.
- The courts have determined that some Special Education Students must be provided home-to school transportation as part of their school program. Special Education Students can not be permanently suspended from home-to-school transportation; however, there are many tools a driver can use.

## **The Individual Education Plan (IEP)**

The IEP is an assessment of the student's academic, physical and behavioral needs developed by the special education team. This information is invaluable for special education bus drivers and regular education drivers with special ed students. An IEP report can provide drivers with knowledge that will allow them to be aware of how to work with special needs students.

The Special Education Team:

Much can be accomplished with the team of professionals that surrounds the special needs student. That includes the parent, teacher and classroom staff, Principal, Special Education Director, Counselors, Therapists as well as you, the Bus Driver. This group of individuals can be invaluable when trying to find ways to accomplish appropriate behavior in a special needs student.